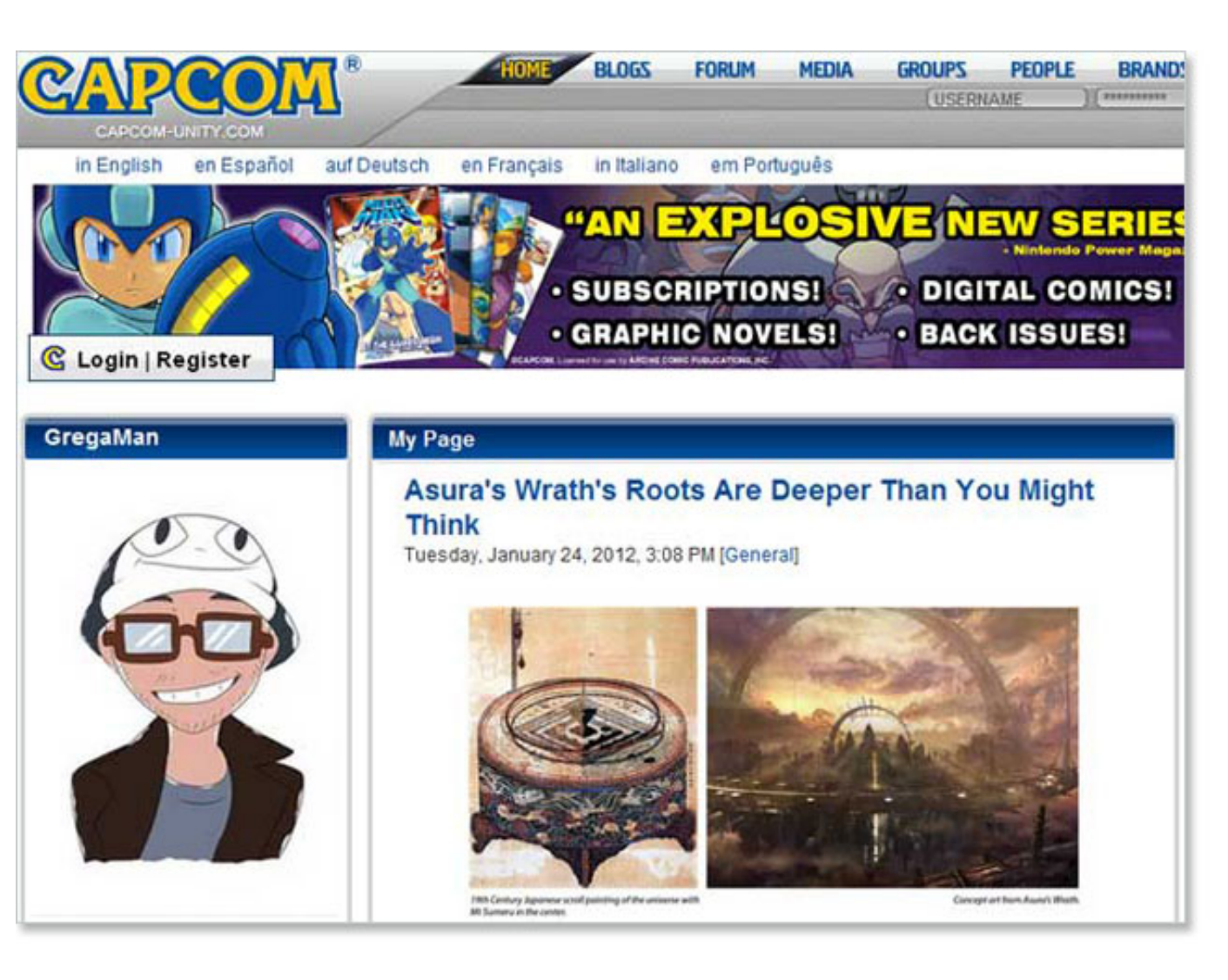
A BUDDHIST'S GUIDE TO ASURA'S WRATH PART 2 - THE BISHOP'S STAFF AND HUNGRY GHOSTS

Posted 03 February 2012

By Richmond Lee

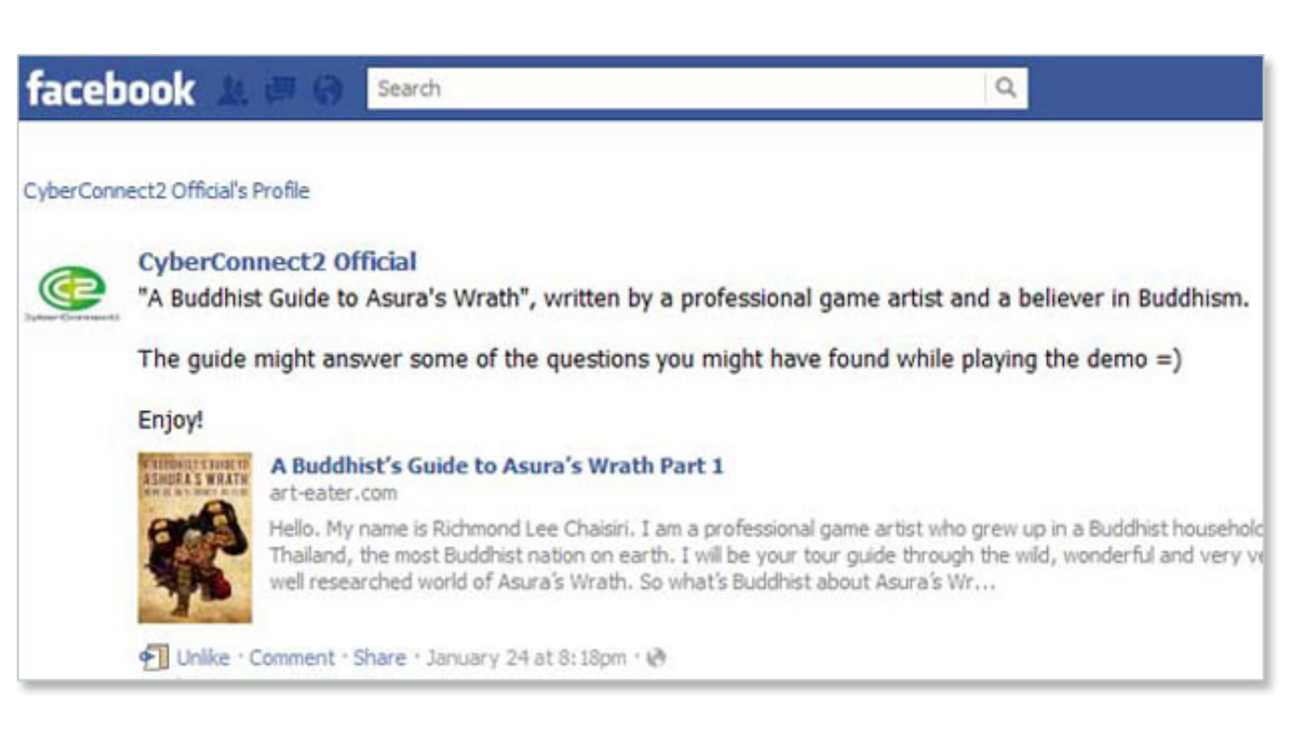
Welcome to the second installment of A Buddhist's Guide to Asura's Wrath. First off, I want to thank everyone who read and shared Part 1. Because of your positive feedback and support, the article got the attention of Capcom and Cyberconnect 2 who reposted it on their website and Facebook page respectively. It feels pretty great to get such positive reception from the creators of the game!

- A Buddhist's Guide to Asura's Wrath Part 1 – Buddhist Cyborgs and the story of the Asura
- A Buddhist's Guide to Asura's Wrath Part 2 – The Bishop's Staff and Hungry Ghosts
- A Buddhist's Guide to Asura's Wrath Part 3 – The Mighty Vajra!



Asura's Wrath's Roots Are Deeper Than You Might Think

Tuesday, January 24, 2012, 3:08 PM [General]



CyberConnect2 Official's Profile

CyberConnect2 Official

"A Buddhist Guide to Asura's Wrath", written by a professional game artist and a believer in Buddhism.

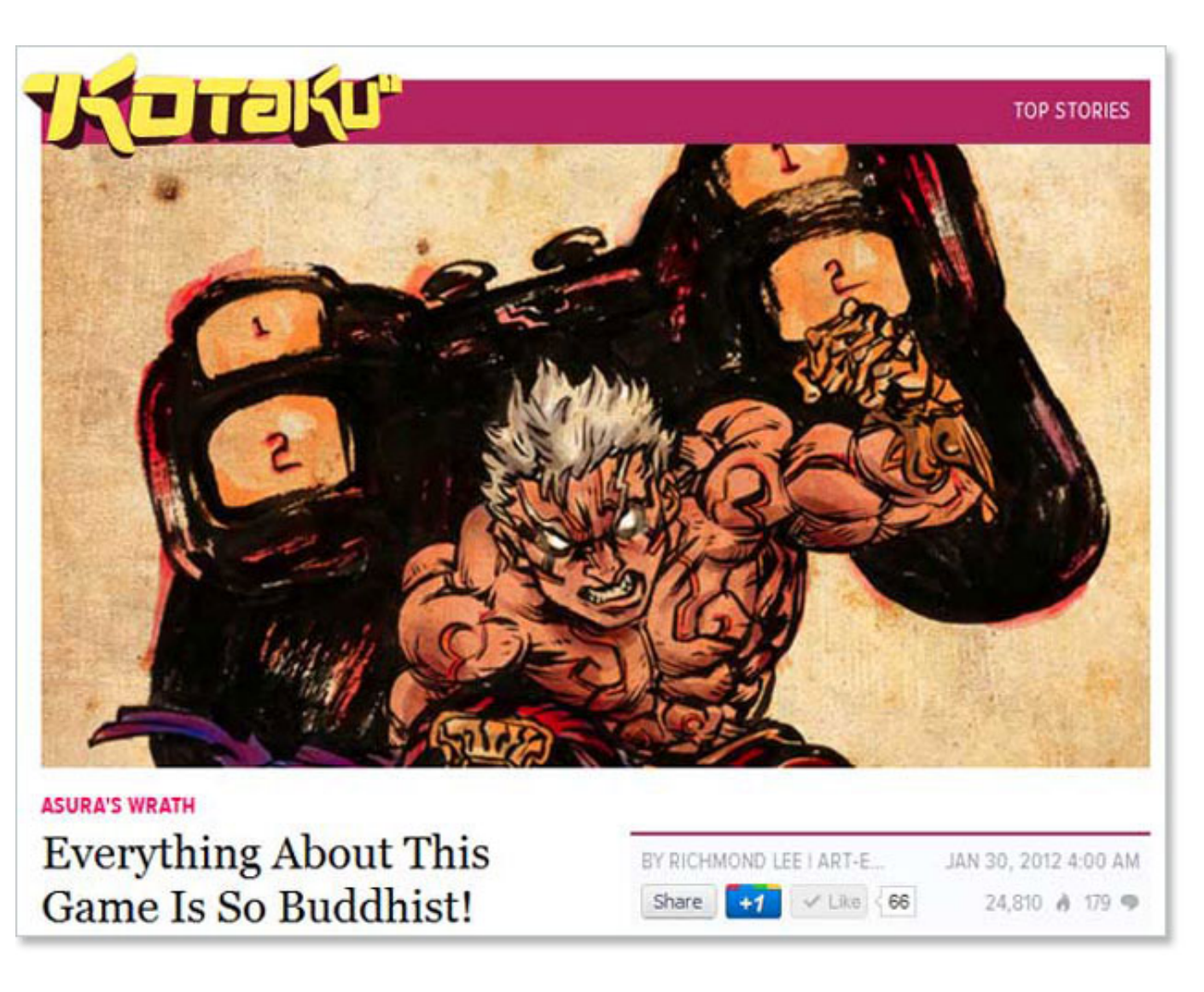
The guide might answer some of the questions you might have found while playing the demo =)

Enjoy!

A Buddhist's Guide to Asura's Wrath Part 1

art-eater.com

The article then went on to be featured on Kotaku.



ASURA'S WRATH

Everything About This Game Is So Buddhist!

BY RICHMOND LEE | ART-E... JAN 30, 2012 4:00 AM

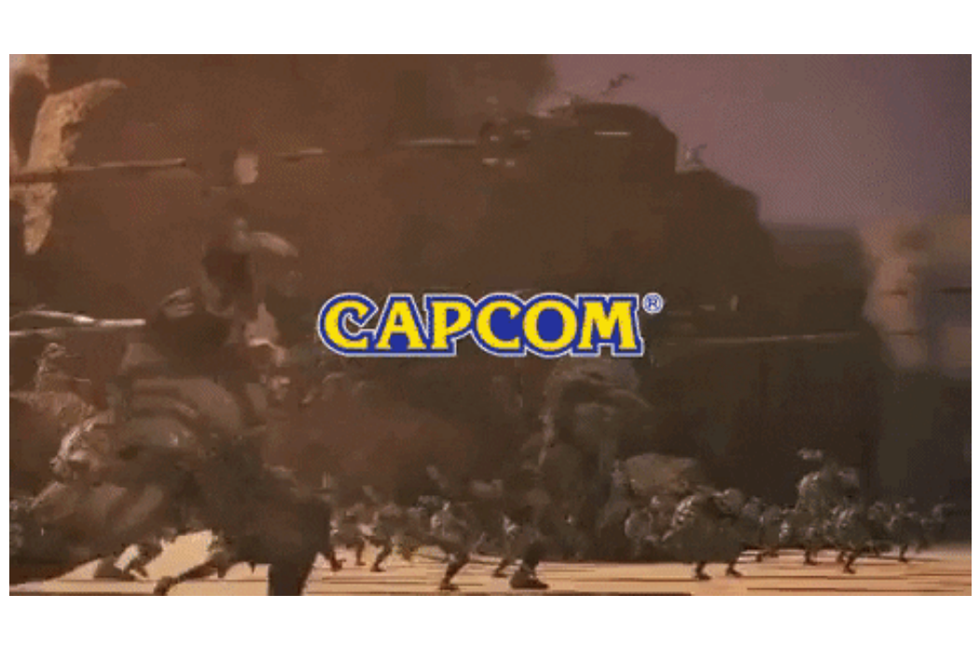
This has been very life affirming for me, so thanks for reading! Now on with the tour! Lets talk about Weapons!

Buddhist Weapons

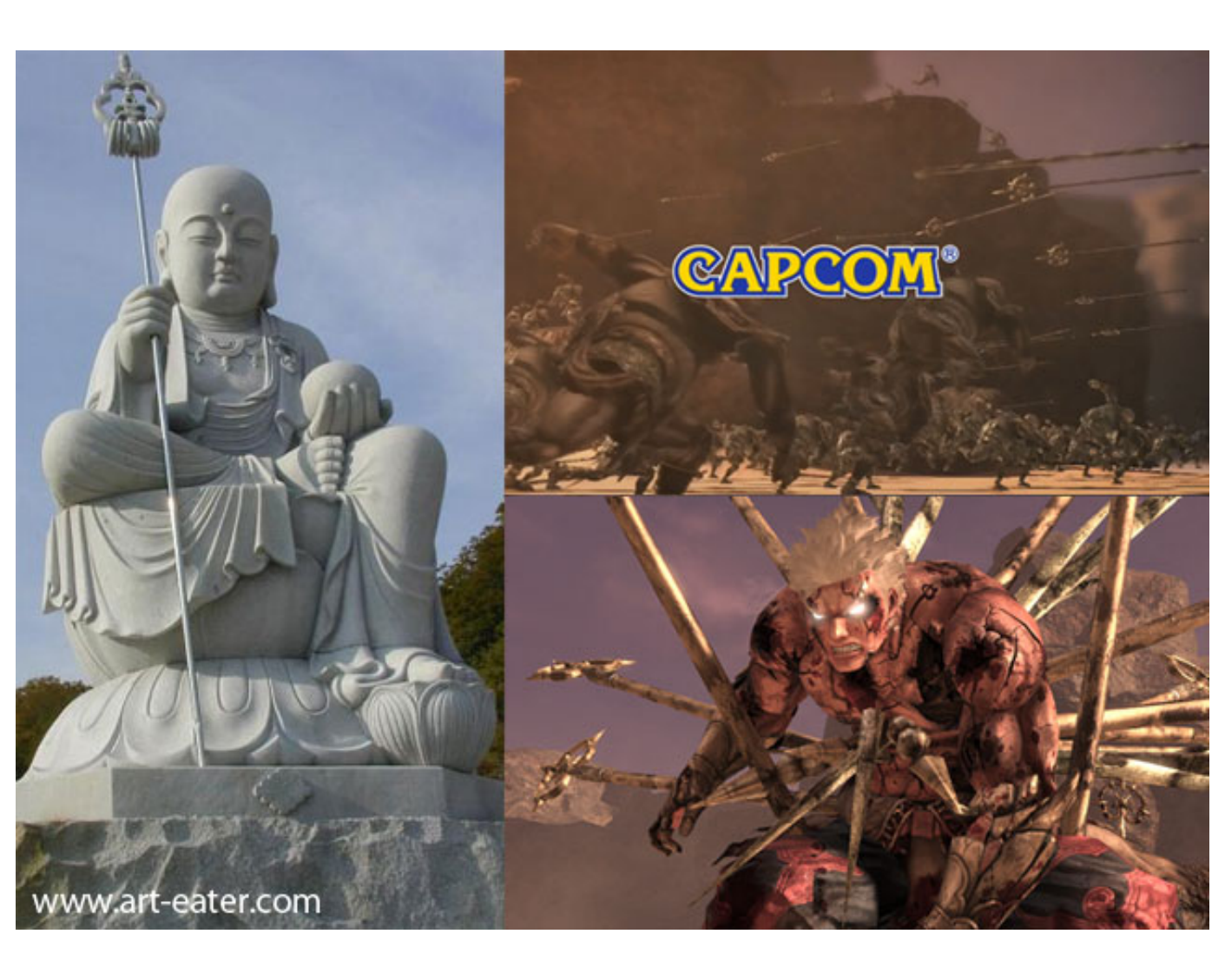
The characters in Asura's Wrath wage war using a mix of ancient and modern weapons. You could say the characters are quite … well armed (haha that was terrible!). Many of the weapons depicted in the game have special significance in Buddhism.

Shakujo (錫杖) – The Bishop's Staff

The debut video for Asura's Wrath opens with Asura being struck by a rain of spears:



The shape at the head of these projectiles indicates that they're shakujos.

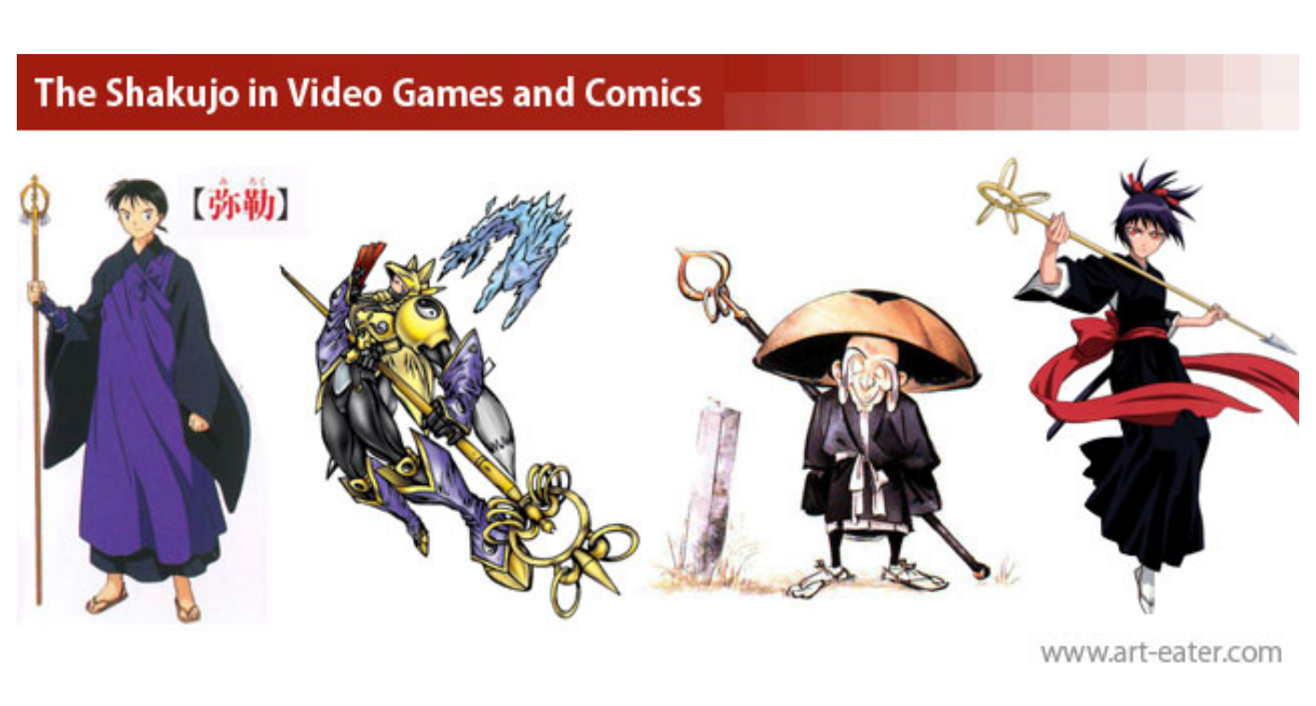


Shakujos, also known as bishop's staffs, monk sticks, xīzhàng (Mandarin) and khakkharas (Sanskrit) were originally walking sticks used by travelling monks originating in India. The sticks were sometimes adorned with jangling rings that were used in prayer and telegraphed the approach of a holy man. The sound of the rings could also be used to ward of dangerous animals and the stick could be used in self defense. Over time the shakujo was incorporated into various religious rituals with the number of rings corresponding to the rank of the wielder.

In the hands of Shaolin monks, the Shakujo was developed into a ritual weapon.

In China, the Shakujo has long been romanticized as the weapon of choice of warrior monks through hundreds of years of Wuxia novels and more recently movies, tv shows, comics and games. This practice lives on in Japan (Zen Buddhism is the Japanese form of Chan Buddhism, the sect of Buddhism practiced in Shaolin) where people still train in fighting with Shakujos to this day.

The Shakujo continues to enjoy popularity as a weapon in many manga, anime and videogames.


The Shakujo in Video Games and Comics
【弥勒】
www.art-eater.com

Left to Right: Miroku from InuYasha, Sakuyamon from Digimon, Caffeine Nicotine from Samurai Shodown; Senna from Bleach.

And now for your viewing pleasure, here is a real life, badass, one armed, Zen Buddhist monk shakujo master:

Demostracion 3
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2/15
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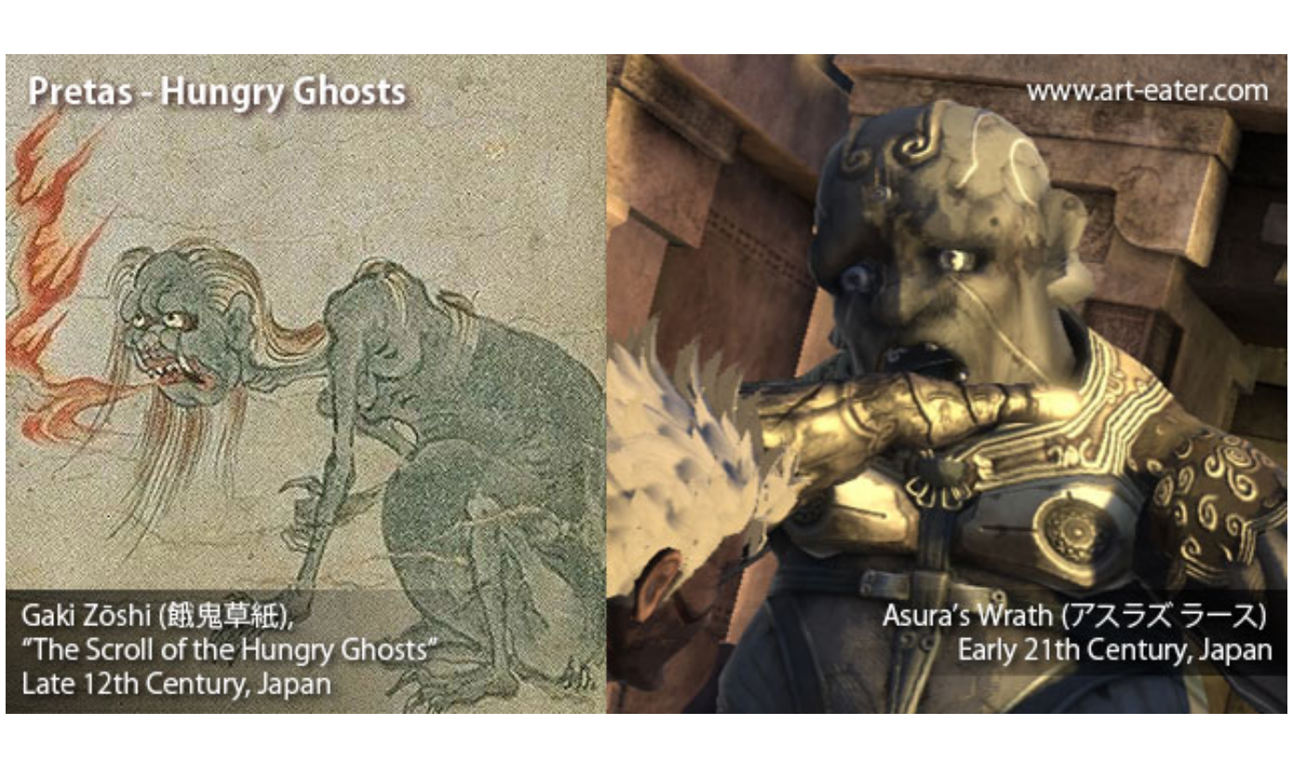
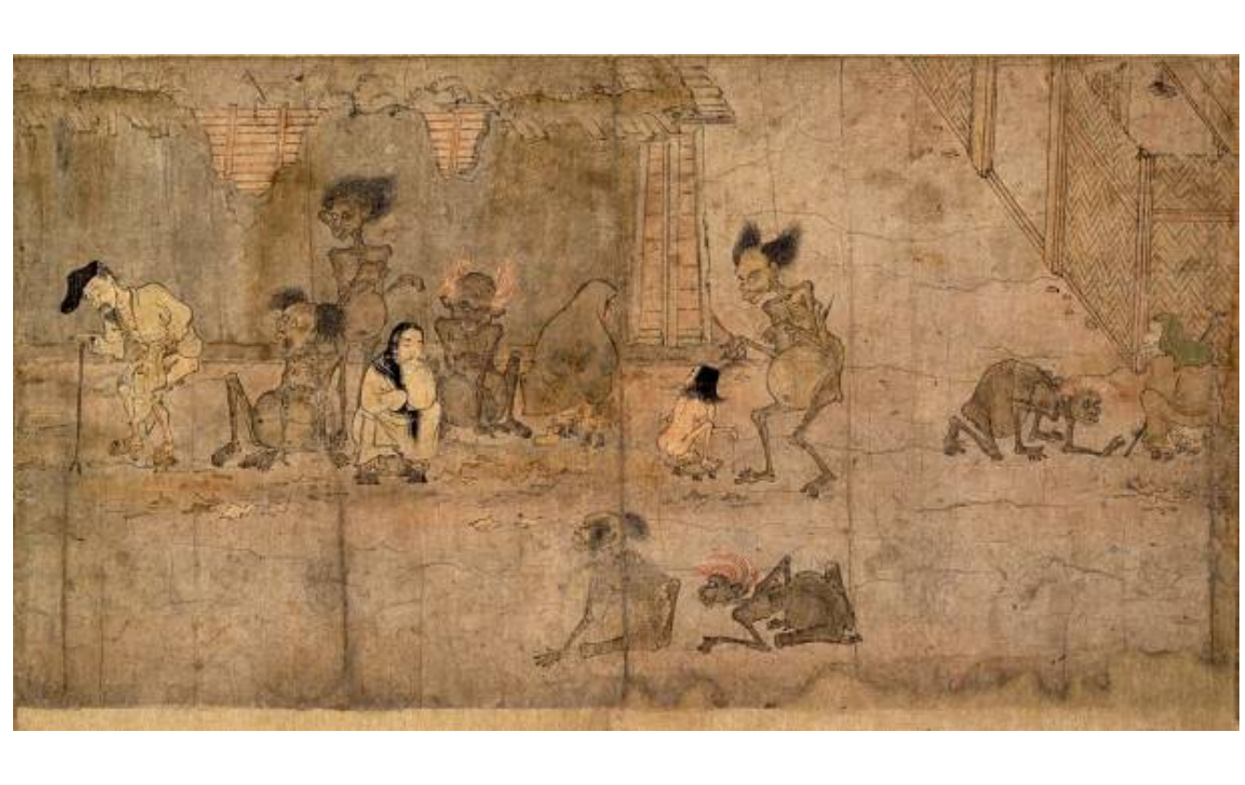
しゃくじょう
杖(法器)を用いた演武

Pretas (餓鬼) – Hungry Ghosts

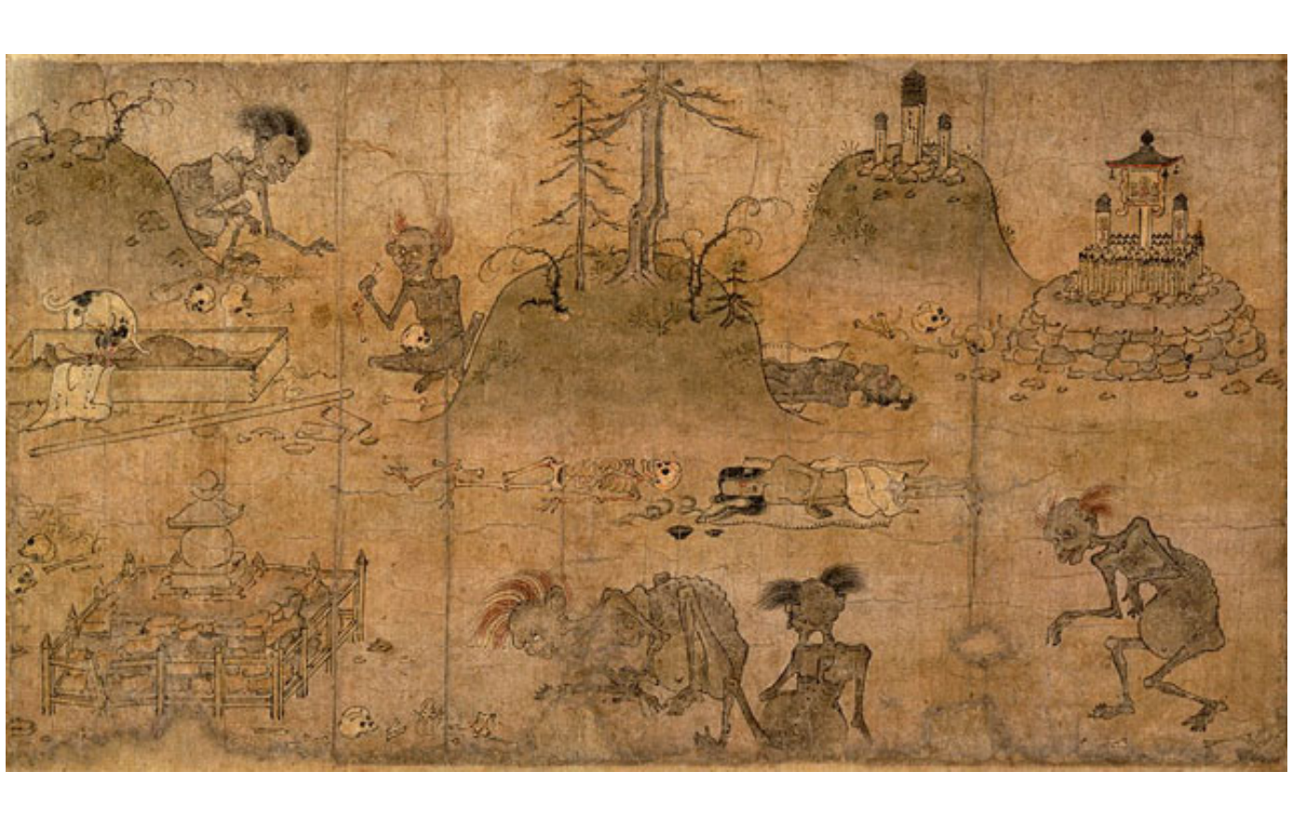
The enemies shown attacking Asura with shakujos are Pretas, also known as hungry ghosts (called "Gaki" in Japanese).


Pretas - Hungry Ghosts
www.art-eater.com
Gaki Zōshi (餓鬼草紙),
"The Scroll of the Hungry Ghosts"
Late 12th Century, Japan
Asura's Wrath (アスラズ ラース)
Early 21th Century, Japan

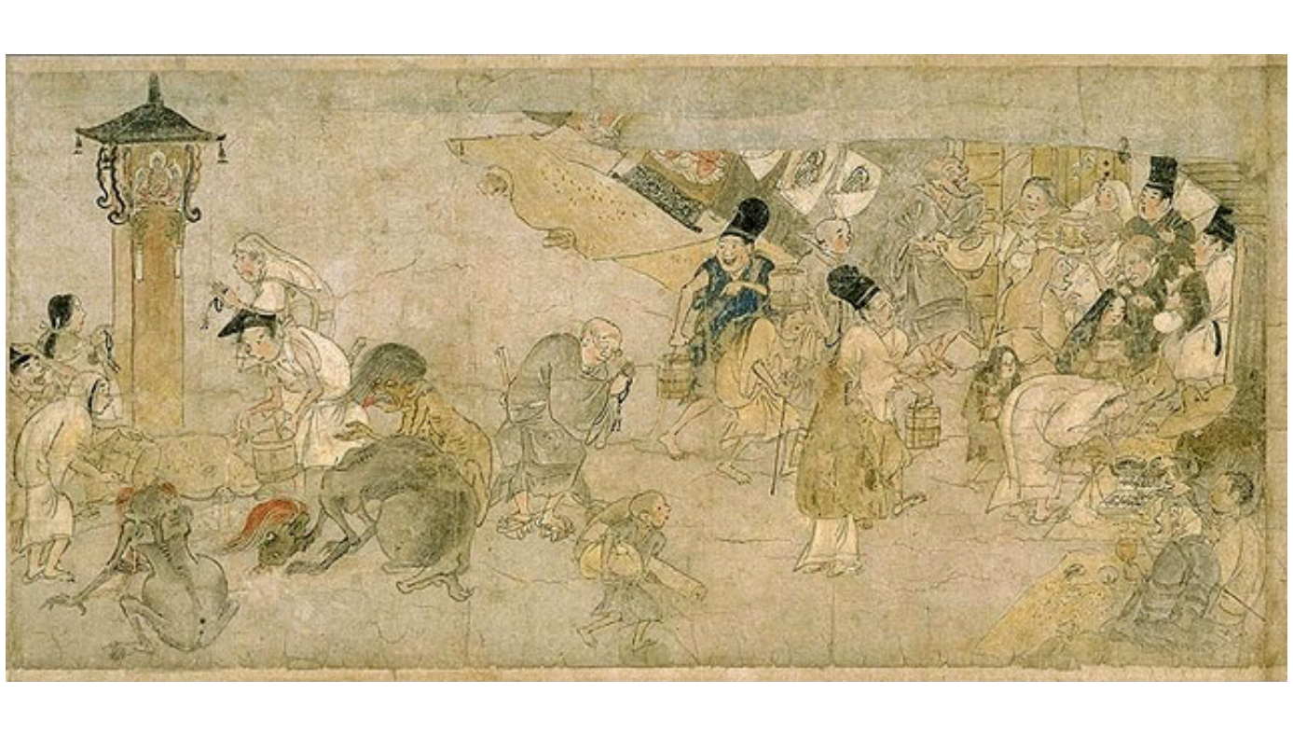
Pretas were greedy people in past lives, now reborn as disfigured monsters who roam the world filled with an unquenchable thirst (usually for something gross like poop).



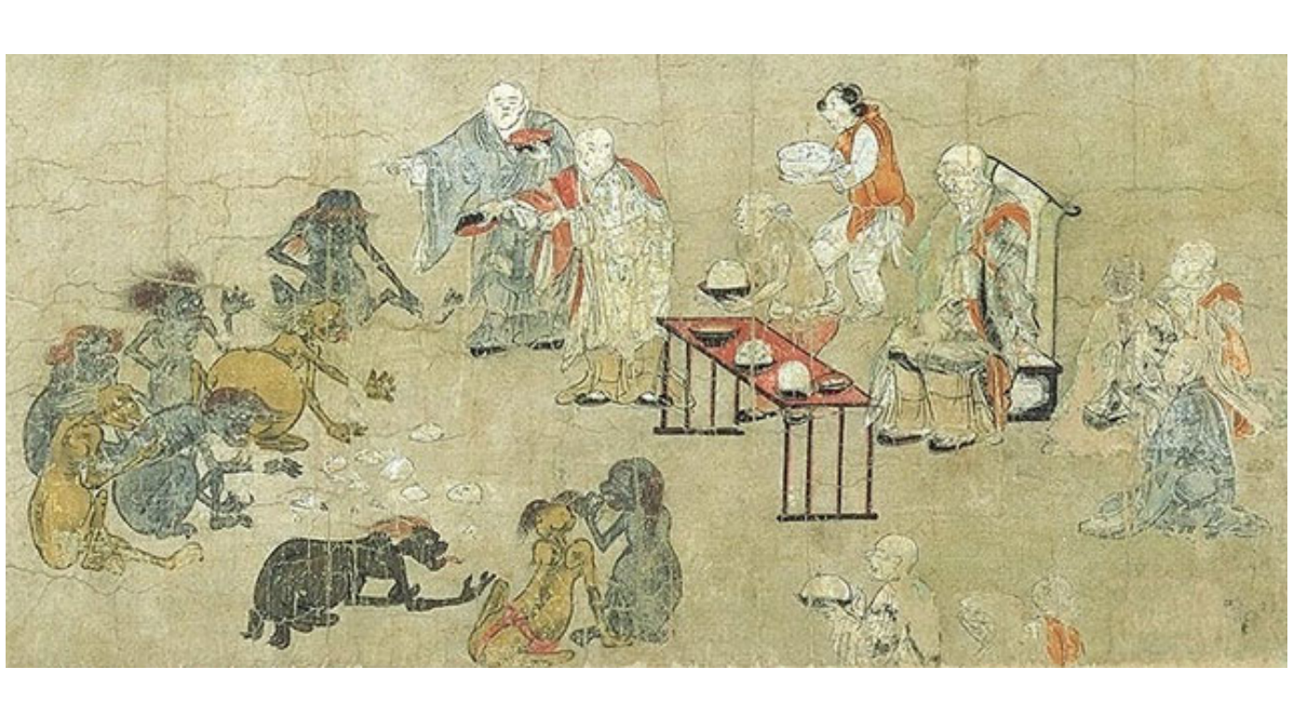
Pretas are characterized by their thin limbs, distended bellies and pitiful expressions. Pretas inhabit the land of hungry ghosts, one of the 6 realms of rebirth, located just below the Asura Realm.



Their world sometimes overlaps with ours, though they're invisible to the human eye and generally have no effect on mortal life.

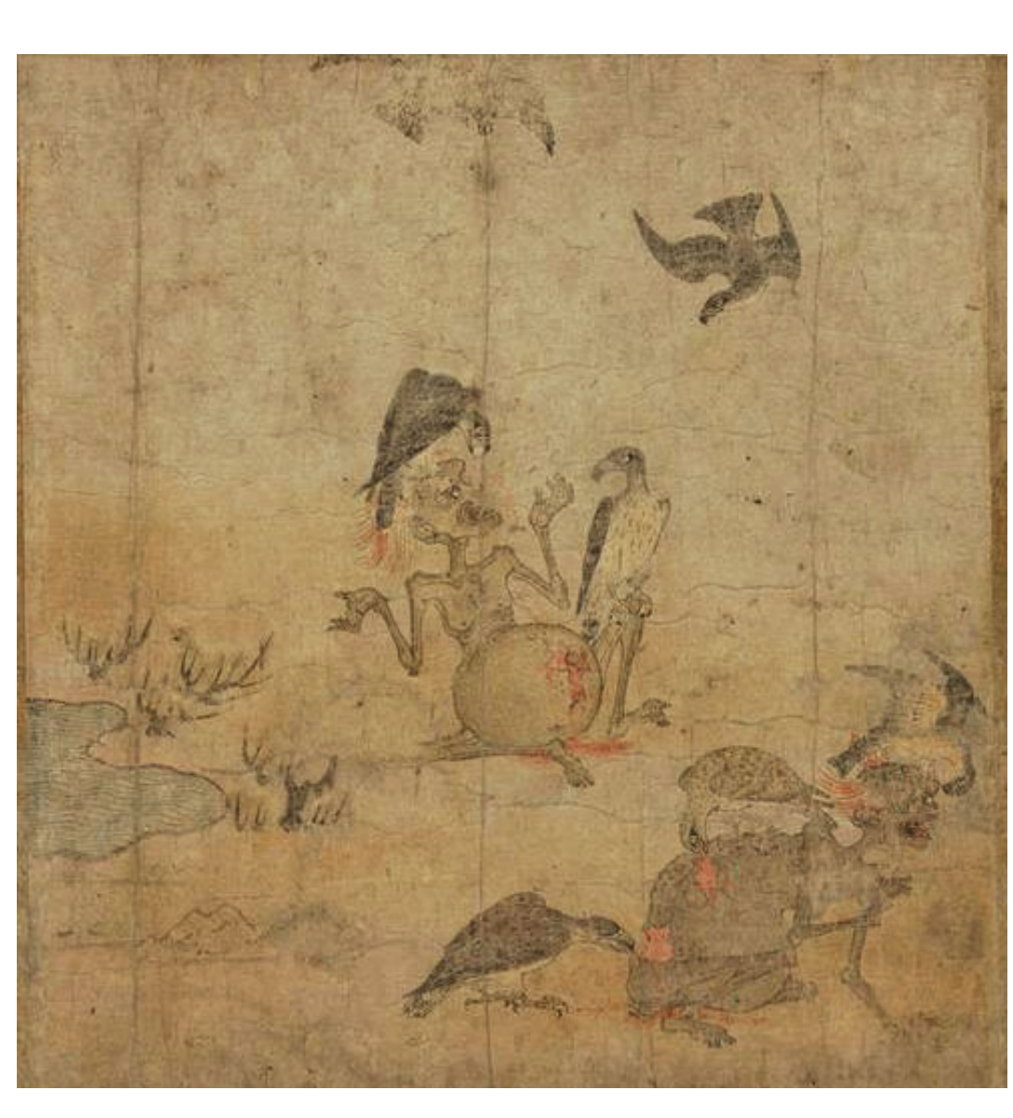


In cultures that observe the Chinese calendar, there's even a special holiday for Pretas called The Hungry Ghost Festival where people leave out offerings of food to relieve the constant suffering of Pretas and help them along to their next life.



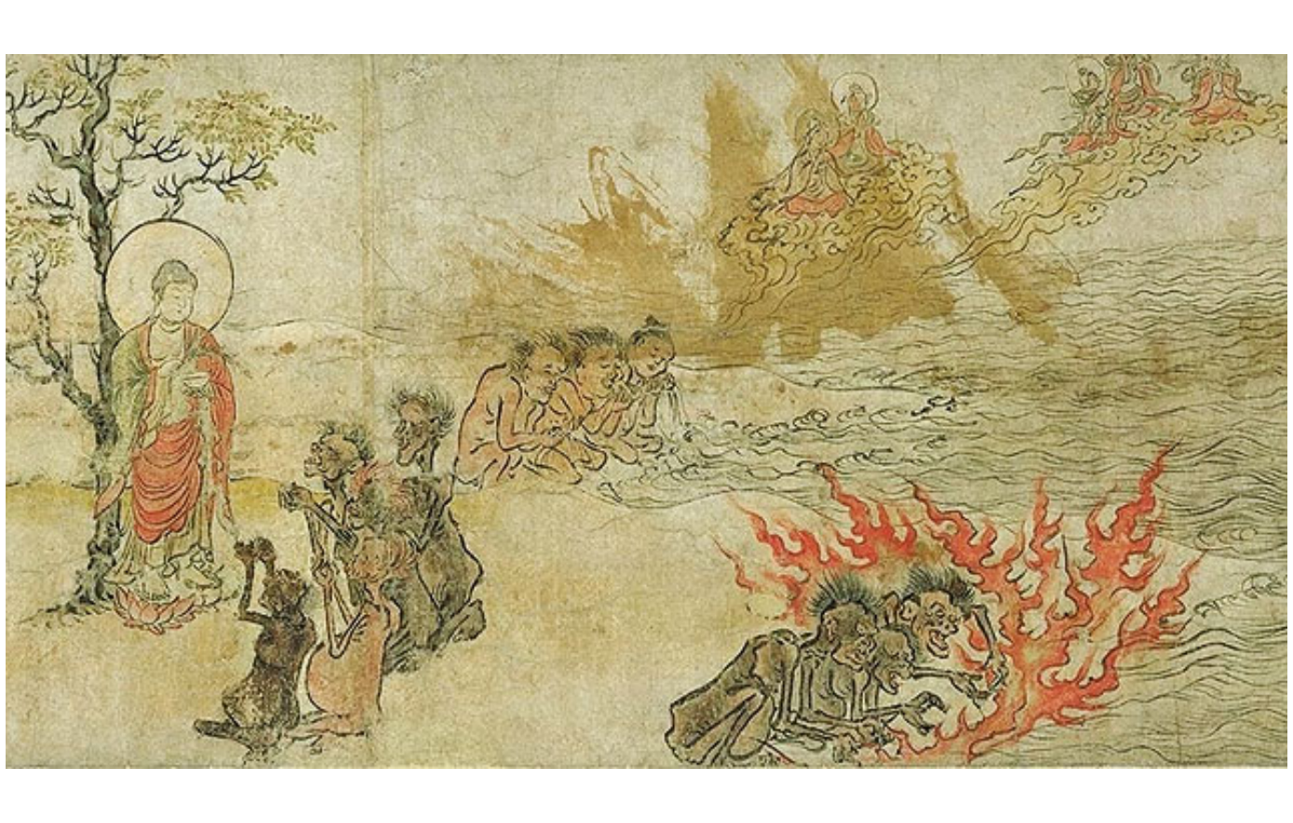
Offerings left out for Pretas during the Hungry Ghost festival. Photo by Worldtripper from Webshots)

Pretas make very good enemy grunts as they're pitiable low ranking spirits.

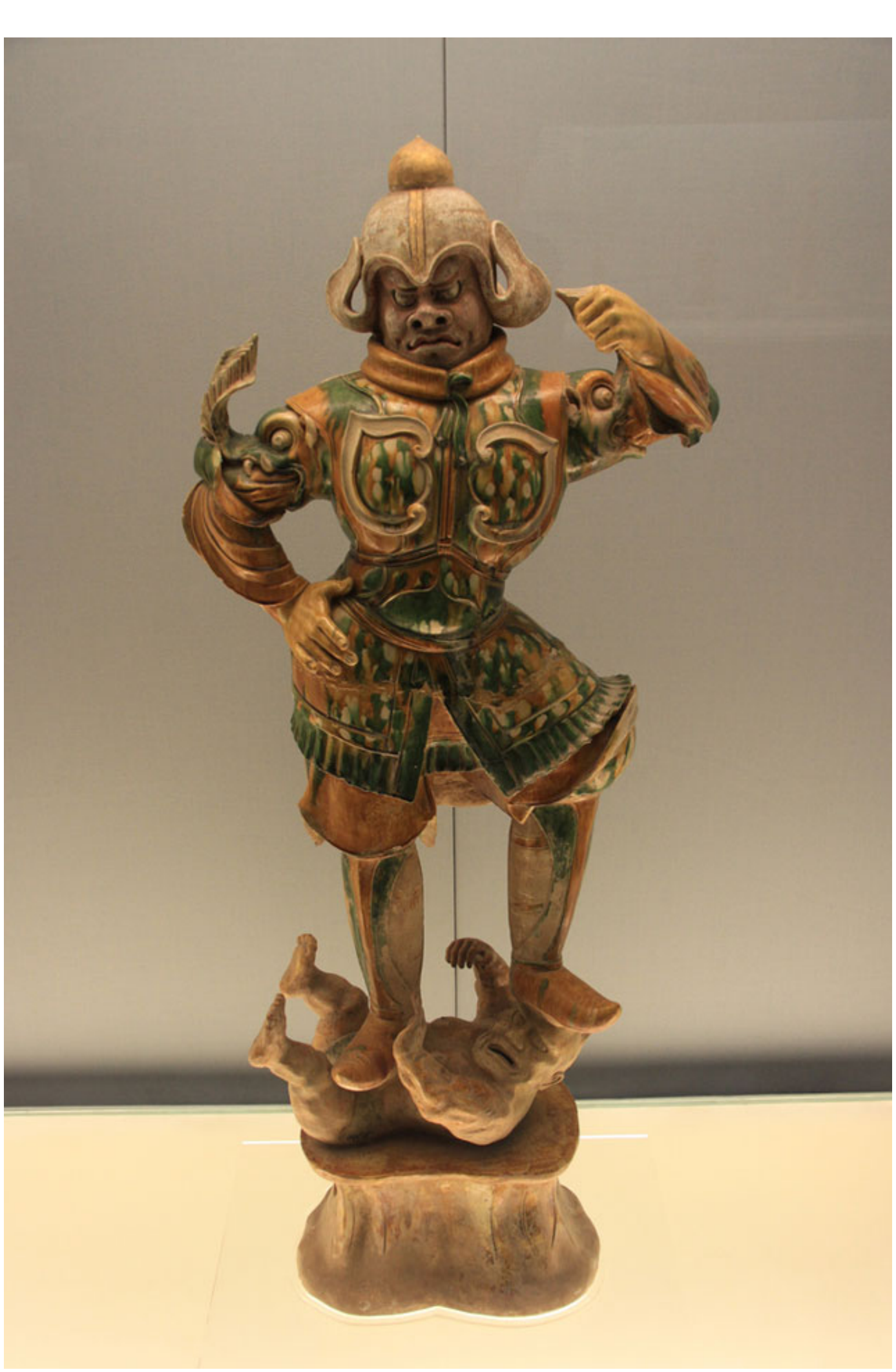


They even get beat up by birds

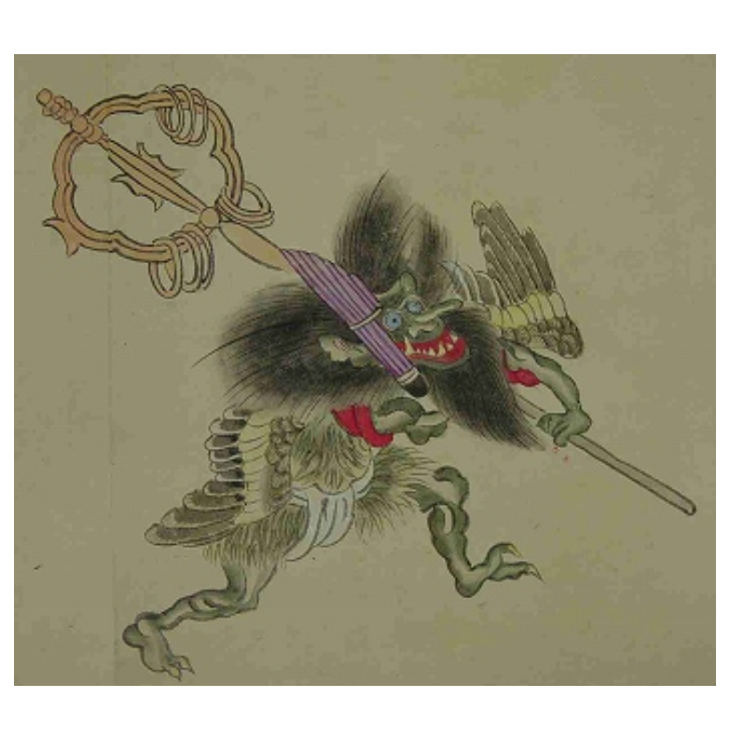
All the scroll paintings of Pretas in this post are from the Gaki Zoshi, a 12the Century Japanese narrative hand scroll that details the Buddhist story of the Preta. For a detailed look at this amazing piece of narrative art, visit the Kyoto National Museum website.



The idea that the Pretas in Asura's Wrath are being commanded by a higher deity is also consistent with Buddhist tradition. Many Buddhist deities (particularly the fierce looking ones) command armies of reformed demons. These deities are often depicted standing proud, stepping on a vanquished demon as a base.



And just for good measure, here's an old painting of a Yokai (not a Preta, but a Japanese goblin) dutifully carrying a shakujo.



That's it for part 2 of A Buddhist's Guide to Asura's Wrath. Here's a link to all parts in case you missed them!

With additional help from Andy Lee

Full List of Asura's Wrath Articles Here:

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